THE PORTUGUESE LETTERS

Love Letters of Mariana to the Marquis de Chamilly

DONALD E. ERICSON

The Portuguese Letters

Love Letters of Mariana to the Marquis de Chamilly

A new and beautiful edition of the famous classic of tender and delicate love. These letters of a Portuguese nun to a French officer have a sweet sadness and that kind of poignant appeal that cannot fail to move the reader.

$1.25

Crown Publishers
New York

DONALD E. ERICSON

THE PORTUGUESE LETTERS

CROWN PUBLISHERS, NEW YORK

Copyright, MCMXLI, by Bennett-Edwards, New York
All Rights Reserved

Printed in the United States of America

FIRST LETTER

SEE, my heart, how extremely lacking you have been in foresight. You have been betrayed, poor thing, and you have betrayed me with deceptive hopes. A passion from which you expected so much joy can give you now nothing but mortal despair, equalled only by the cruelty of the separation which causes it. This separation, to which my grief, imaginative as it is, can give no name poignant enough — will it prevent me from ever looking again into those eyes in which I saw so much love, those eyes which taught me emotions that filled me with delight, which were everything to me, and gave me endless joy? Alas, my eyes have lost the only light that gave them life; they have nothing now but tears, and I use them

only in incessant weeping since I have learned that you are determined upon this separation which I cannot bear, which will yet be my death.

And yet I seem to have an affection for this misery which you alone have brought upon me. From the first moment I saw you my life was yours, and somehow I take pleasure in sacrificing it to you. A thousand times a day I send my sighs to you; everywhere they seek you out, but all they bring me in return for so much anguish is the warning voice of my sad fate, which will not let me console myself, which keeps whispering, "Stop, Mariana; stop torturing yourself in vain; stop seeking a lover whom you will never see again. He has crossed the sea to escape you; he is in France, surrounded by pleasures. Does he think for a moment of your grief? Coldly he rejects your tenderness and gives no thanks."

But no, I cannot bring myself to think so harshly of you; I am too deeply interested

in justifying you. I do not wish to believe that you have forgotten me.

Am I not unhappy enough without tormenting myself with false suspicions? And why should I force myself to forget all the efforts you made to convince me of your love? I was so charmed by these attentions that I should be ungrateful indeed if I did not still love you with the warmth my passion gave me when I enjoyed the proofs of yours. How can it be that the memories of such delightful moments have become so painful? Must these memories, contrary to their own nature, serve only to tyrannize over my heart? Your last letter has left my heart in a strange state; its agitation was so strong that it seemed to be trying to separate itself from me to go in search of you. I was so overcome with the violence of these emo tions that for three hours I knew not what I was doing — I forbade myself to return to a life which I must lose for you, since I cannot keep it for you. In spite of myself, at last I saw light again. I flattered myself with

the thought that I was dying of love, and besides, I was relieved by no longer having to feel my heart torn with anguish over your absence.

Since these events I have been through several stages. How can I ever again be without pain as long as I do not see you? But I bear it without a murmur since it comes from you. Tell me, is this my reward for loving you so much? But it matters not; I am resolved to adore you as long as I live, and never to see anyone else. And for you as well, believe me, it will be best never to love anyone else. Could you be satisfied with a passion less fervent than mine? You will find, perhaps, greater beauty (though you once told me I was beautiful enough), but never, never will you find so much love – and all the rest is nothing.

Do not fill your letters any more with unimportant matters, and do not tell me again to think of you. I cannot forget you. I cannot forget that you have given me the

hope that you would come to spend some time with me. Oh, why not your whole life? If I could leave this miserable convent, I would not wait here in Portugal for the fulfillment of your promises. Without regard for anything I would come to seek you, to follow you, and to love you, wherever you might be. But I dare not persuade myself that this is possible. I will not nourish a hope that is so sure to give me pleasure; I wish to have only feelings of sorrow.

I admit, however, that the opportunity my brother has given me of writing to you has excited some feelings of happiness in me, and has interrupted for an instant the despair in which I live. I entreat you to tell me why you were so intent on captivating me, as you did, since you well knew that you would have to leave me? Why this frenzy to make me unhappy? Why did you not leave me in peace in my convent? Had I done you any wrong? But forgive me, I do not blame you. I cannot think of vengeance; I blame only the hardness of my fate. It seems to

me that in separating us it has inflicted upon us all the evil that we could ever fear. Our hearts it cannot separate; love, which is more powerful than fate, has united them forever. If you have any feeling for me at all, write to me often. I deserve the little effort that it costs you to let me know how you feel and what you are doing. And above all, come to me. Adieu! I cannot let this paper go; you will touch it with your hands. How I wish I were in its place. But this is foolish, and I know too well that it is not possible. Good-by, I can go no further. Love me always . . . and continue to make me suffer.

SECOND LETTER

I HAVE just learned from your lieutenant that a storm forced you to put back to a port of Algarve. I fear you have suffered a great deal on the voyage, and this fear has taken such possession of me that I no longer think of my own distress. Do you truly believe that your lieutenant is more interested in what happens to you than I am? Why is he better informed; in short, why have you not written to me?

I am indeed unhappy if you have been unable to find an opportunity since you took leave of me, and even more so, if you have found one and still have not written. Your injustice and your ingratitude are beyond all measure, but I should be driven to despair

if they were to bring upon you any misfortune. I prefer that you should go unpunished than that I should be avenged in this way.

I will not believe the evidence which indicates that you no longer love me; I would rather abandon myself blindly to my passion than dwell upon the reasons you give me to complain of your neglect. How much unhappiness you would have spared me, had your attitude been as indifferent the first day we met as it has lately appeared to me. But who would not have been deceived by so much ardor; who could have failed to believe it sincere? It is a difficult task to learn to suspect the sincerity of those to whom we have given our love.

That the least excuse is enough for you, I know very well; but even when you do not trouble to give me one, my love is so unshakably on your side that I accuse you for only one reason, that I may have the pleasure of justifying you myself. You won me over entirely with your attentions; you

inflamed me with your ardor; your kindness cast a spell over me, and finally there were your oaths to make me sure. The violence of my own desire seduced me; that which began with such pleasantness and joy is now a thing of tears and sighs and miserable death, and I see no help anywhere.

I cannot deny that my love brought me delight beyond all expectation, but now I am paying for it with inexpressible pain. All the emotions you waken in me are violent. Had I shown any stubborn resistance to your love-making, had I given you cause for worry or jealousy in order to inflame your passion further, had you noticed in my behavior any false reserve, or had I possessed enough willpower to oppose my reason to my natural attraction to you (although these efforts would doubtless have been futile), you would now have a right to punish me severely and to use the power you hold over me. But you seemed to love even before you told me that you did. You gave me proof of a

great passion; I was enraptured and abandoned myself to a mad love.

You were not blinded as I was; how then did you allow me to reach the state in which I now find myself? What could you have wished to make of my transports, which must only have seemed to you inopportune? You certainly knew that you would not stay in Portugal forever; why then did you single me out to make me so miserable? Without doubt you could have found here some more beautiful woman with whom you could have had as much pleasure, since it was only the grossest sort of pleasure for which you were looking. She would have loved you tenderly as long as you were with her; time would have consoled her for your absence and you could have left her without being false and cruel. What you have done to me seems more the conduct of a tyrant, relentless in his persecution, than that of a lover whose sole desire is to please.

Why, why this cruelty to a heart that

is yours? It is clear to me that you are as much inclined to be prejudiced against me as I have been to be persuaded in your favor.

Without the aid of my love and without feeling that I had done anything extraordinary, I could have resisted even stronger reasons than those which caused you to leave me. They would all have appeared insufficient to me; nothing could have torn me from you. But you wanted to avail yourself of any pretexts which you could discover for returning to France. A ship was leaving. Why didn't you let it leave? Your family had written you . . . are you not aware of all the reproaches I have had to bear from mine? Your honor obliged you to abandon me. Have I given any thought to mine? You were called upon to serve your king. If everything that is said about him is true, he had no need of your service; he would have excused you.

I should have been too happy if we had been able to spend our lives together, but

since this cruel separation had to take place, I rejoice that I have not been faithless. Not for all the world would I have been guilty of so black an action. Could you really have known the tenderness I felt and the deepest thoughts of my heart, and yet have resolved to desert me for ever, to expose me to the fear of believing that you will never think of me again — except to sacrifice me to some new passion?

I realize that I love you as a woman loves who has lost her senses. I do not, however, complain of the violence of my emotions. I accustom myself to their persecutions; I could not live without the happiness which I come upon in the midst of a thousand sorrows and which remains despite them all — that I love you.

Nevertheless, I am constantly tormented by the hate and disgust I feel for everything. My family, my friends, this convent — all have become unbearable to me. Everything I am forced to see and every duty that

inescapably presses upon me fill me with abhorrence. So jealous am I of my passion that it seems as though all my actions, all my duties, center in you. I am disturbed if I cannot devote all my moments to you.

What would I do if my heart were not filled with so much hate and love? Could I possibly survive all the thoughts which constantly occupy me to live a tranquil and tedious life again? Such emptiness, such insensibility – no, they are not for me.

Every one has noticed the complete change that has taken place in my mood, my behavior, in my entire nature. The Mother Superior spoke to me about it, sharply at first, and afterward not without kindness. I don't know what answer I gave her; I think I confessed everything. Even the strictest of the nuns has pity for my condition. It has won consideration and tenderness from them all. There is no one who is not touched by my plight. You alone remain profoundly indifferent; you write me cold letters filled with repetitions, with half the paper blank,

and they show plainly that you are anxious only to be finished. . . . . .

These last few days Dona Brites has been at me to get me out of my room. With the intention of diverting me, she led me to walk with her on the balcony from which one looks out towards Mertola. I followed her but was at once overcome with such painful memories that I spent the rest of the day weeping. When she had brought me back, I threw myself upon my bed, tortured by a thousand thoughts of the unlikelihood of my ever being myself again. All that is done to cheer me but deepens my despair, and even in the remedies I find new reasons for affliction . . . It was on this balcony that, charmed by your bearing, I so often watched you ride by; and I stood on this balcony on that fateful day when I felt the first stirrings of my unhappy passion. Although you did not yet know me, I had the feeling that you were making an effort to please me. I was convinced that you had noticed me among all the others who were there. When you

stopped, I imagined you were delighted that I could see you better and admire the skill with which you spurred your horse. My heart leaped into my throat when you rode him over a dangerous spot. In a word, I took a secret interest in everything you did; I felt that you were not indifferent to me, and that all that you did you did for me.

Only too well do you know the sequel of this first episode. Although I have no need for caution, still it were better that I should not describe it to you lest your guilt become greater than it is now, if that were possible; and lest I should have to reproach myself for useless efforts to persuade you to be true to me. You will never be true. Can I expect to gain by letters and reproaches what my love and my surrender have not been able to win from your ingratitude? I am too sure of my unhappiness. Your unjustifiable behavior does not leave me the slightest ground for doubt, and I am prepared for anything since you have deserted me.

Is it possible that your charm works solely upon me? Do not other eyes find you attractive? It would not be displeasing to me, I think, to find that the feelings of other women in some degree justified mine, and I should like it if all the women in France found you attractive, but none loved you and none could please you. The prospect is impossible — laughable. However, I have undergone enough to know that you are not capable of a deep attachment; that you can forget me without the slightest difficulty, even though no new love replaces the old. Perhaps I should wish you to have some sort of reasonable pretext . . . I should certainly be more unhappy, but you would not be so much at fault.

I see how you will live in France, in unlimited freedom but with no great pleasure. The fatigue of the long voyage, a little comfort, and the fear of not being able to respond to my desire will keep you there. Do not fear for me. I shall be satisfied just

to see you from time to time and to know that we are in the same place. But perhaps I am deceiving myself, and you will be more susceptible to the reserve and coldness of someone else than you have been to my favors. Can it really be that harsh treatment will arouse you?

Before involving yourself in a deep passion, think of my excessive sufferings, the uncertainty of my condition, the fluctuations of my feelings, the absurdities of my letters, my confidences, my despair, my wishes and my jealousy . . . Oh! You are going to make yourself unhappy. I implore you to take advantage of the state in which I am so that at least what I am suffering now for you may not be in vain. About five or six months ago you told me an unpleasant secret. With great frankness you confided to me that you had loved a woman at home. If it is she who prevents you from returning, let me know without any thought of sparing me, so that I may end this agony of doubt.

A small remnant of hope still sustains me. If it leads to nothing, it would be better for me to give it up at once and myself with it. Send me her picture and some of her letters. Write me everything she says to you. Perhaps I will find in them some reason to console myself or to make me more inconsolable.

It is impossible for me to remain any longer in this situation; any change would be for the better. I should like also a picture of your brother and one of your sister. Everything that means something to you is very dear to me, for I am completely devoted to all that interests you. I have no interest left in my own life. Often I think that I have enough humility to serve her whom you love. So cast down have I been by your harsh treatment and your contemptuous attitude that I dare not believe, even in my thoughts, that I should be jealous, without bringing your disapproval down upon me . . . Yes, sometimes I feel that I am the guilty one in reproaching you. Often I am convinced

that I ought not let you see as openly as I do feelings which you do not like.

There is an officer here who has been waiting a long time for this letter. I had intended to write it in such a manner that you would read it without aversion; but you see, it has come out all wrong. I have beaten my breast too much. I must bring it to a close. Oh, if I only could. It seems as though I am talking to you when I write; you are brought almost before me. The next letter will be neither so long nor so importunate. On the strength of this assurance you will be able to open it and read it. What purpose can there be in continuing to talk of a love which displeases you? I will not do it again.

In a few days it will be a year since I gave myself to you without reserve. Your passion seemed to me to be so powerful and so sincere. Never did it occur to me that my yielding would drive you away, that you would be forced to travel five hundred miles and to expose yourself to the dangers of a shipwreck only to get away from me. From

no one did I deserve such treatment. Do you not recall how shy and confused and distraught I was? But you will not recall anything that might obligate you, despite yourself, to think tenderly of me.

The officer who is to bring you this letter has told me for the fourth time that he must go. He is in such haste! Surely he must be leaving some unfortunate girl behind. Adieu! It costs me more to bring this letter to an end than it cost you to leave me, perhaps for ever. Adieu! I dare not call you by a thousand tender names nor abandon myself freely to my emotions. How dear you are to me — and how cruel. You do not write . . . I cannot stop myself from telling you that again. I am starting all over again, and the officer must leave. What difference does it make, let him go; I write more for myself than for you. I need some release. You will be alarmed when you see how long this letter is; you will not read it. What have I done to be so unhappy? Why have you made my life so unbearable? If only I had been born

in some other part of the world! Adieu, for-
give me, I am afraid to beg you again to love
me. See what I have become . . .

THIRD LETTER

WHAT will become of me; what would you have me do? I find myself so far from everything I had once anticipated. I imagined that you would write me from all the places through which you passed, and that your letters would be very long; that you would sustain my passion with the hope of seeing you again; that complete confidence in your faithfulness would give me some sort of repose, so that my life would become tolerable, without too much anguish. I even went so far as to consider for a moment how I might become free of my pain if some day the certainty should rise within me that you had really forgotten me. Your absence, rare moments of deep tranquillity, the fear of completely ruining the little health still left

to me after so many sleepless nights, the improbability of your return, the coldness of your behavior and of your last farewell, your departure on such petty pretexts — all these and a thousand other reasons, just as pat and just as hollow, seemed to promise me certain aid, should I ever need it. After all, never having had to struggle with anyone but myself, how was I to suspect all my weaknesses or foresee all my present sufferings? Ah! how I am to be pitied in that I cannot share my burden with you, in that I am all alone in my unhappiness. This is what crushes me, and I shudder at the thought that in all our pleasures, your deepest feelings were never really engaged. I realize now the deceitfulness of all your acts. You deceived me every time you said that it made you happy to be alone with me. Your ardors and transports were due only to my importunity; you had calculatingly planned to kindle my passion; you looked upon it only as another conquest, and your heart was never really moved by my love . . . But are you not unfortunate, and do you not reveal a great lack of delicacy

in not having known how to take advantage of my passion save in this way? How is it possible that with so much love I should not have been able to make you completely happy? I regret only because of my love for you the infinite pleasures you have lost. Can it be that you did not want to enjoy them? Oh! If you only knew, you could have found in them a far keener delight than you had in deceiving me; and you would find that there is much more happiness and a more noble satisfaction in loving passionately than in being loved.

I don't know any longer what I am, what I do, what I want; I am torn by a thousand conflicting emotions . . . can one imagine such misery? I love you madly; yet my consideration for you is such that I would spare you from being agitated by the same madness. I should kill myself or die of grief if I thought that you would never find peace, that your life would be only trouble and anguish, that you would weep continually, that life would become hateful to you.

I cannot endure my own sorrows; how then could I stand the pain which yours would give me — pain which would be a thousand times more intense? And yet, I cannot make up my mind to wish you not to think of me; and, to tell the truth, I am furiously jealous of everything there in France which gives you pleasure, which touches your heart or your fancy.

I do not know why I write to you. You will only take pity on me, and I don't want your pity. I despise myself when I think of all that I have sacrificed for you. I have lost my reputation; I have exposed myself to the anger of my family, to the severity of this country's laws regarding nuns, and to your ingratitude, which to me seems the greatest of all misfortunes. But I am well aware that my remorse is not so real; that with all my heart I should gladly have wished to risk greater dangers for love of you; and that I take a fatal pleasure in having put life and honor at stake. Should I not have placed at your disposal all that is most precious to me?

And ought I not be very glad to have used it as I did? It even seems to me that I am not so completely satisfied either with my grief or the excess of my love, although I certainly have no reason to be satisfied with you. I live, a faithless creature, and do just as much to preserve my life as to destroy it. Ah, I die of shame! My despair exists only in my letters!

If I loved you as much as I have told you a thousand times, should I not have died long ago? I have deceived you; it is for you to reproach me. Alas! why do you not? I watched you go away, I can never hope to see you return, and yet I live! I have betrayed you. I ask your forgiveness . . . but do not grant it. Treat me harshly, reproach me that my emotions are not ardent enough; be more difficult to please; let me hear that you wish me to die of love; I entreat you to help me in this way so that I may overcome the weakness of my sex and put an end to my irresolution by genuine despair. A tragic end would no doubt oblige you to think of

me often; my memory would grow dear to you, and you might even be deeply touched by my unusual death. Would not death be better than the state to which you have brought me? Adieu . . . I wish that I had never seen you. I realize the falsity of this sentiment; at the very moment of writing it, I know that I should prefer having loved you unhappily to never having seen you at all. I submit then without a murmur to my evil destiny since you were not willing to make it a better one.

Adieu . . . promise to mourn for me tenderly should I die of grief; and at least let the violence of my passion make everything else uninteresting and distasteful to you. This consolation will be enough for me; for if I have to give you up forever, I would not then be leaving you to another. Would you not be very cruel to use my despair to make yourself more attractive and to demonstrate that you have inspired the greatest passion in the world? Adieu again. My letters are too long; I have not sufficient consideration for

you. I ask your forgiveness, and dare to hope you will have some indulgence for a poor, crazed creature who, as you very well know, was sane enough before she loved you. Adieu . . . it seems to me that I write too much of my unbearable condition, but I thank you from the bottom of my heart for the despair you cause me, and I despise the tranquillity in which I lived before knowing you. Adieu . . . my love grows with every moment. How many things I still have to say to you . . .

FOURTH LETTER

IT seems to me that I am doing the greatest possible wrong to the feelings of my heart in trying to make them clear in writing to you. How happy I should be if you could guess them by the violence of your own! But I cannot depend upon you, and I cannot keep myself from telling you--although much less bitterly than I feel it -- that you ought not illtreat me, as you do, with a neglect that is driving me to despair and even brings shame upon yourself. It is fitting at least that you permit me to complain of the woes which I foresaw when I found that you were determined to leave me. I deceived myself—it is so clear now—when I expected you to act in better faith than is usual in these situations; for the depth

of my love seemed to lift me above any sort of suspicion, and to call for more than the usual degree of faithfulness on your part. But your inclination to betray me is so great that it overpowers the gratitude you owe for all I have done for you. Of course I should not cease to be very unhappy if you loved me only because I loved you — I should prefer to owe everything to your affection alone — but even this is so far from being the case that I have not received a single letter from you in six months! I attribute all this misfortune to the blindness with which I entered into this attachment. Should I not have foreseen that my happiness was bound to come to an end sooner than my love? Could I hope that you would spend all your life in Portugal, that you would renounce your country and your fortune to think only of me? My pain is without solace, and the remembrance of past pleasures overwhelms me with despair. Can all my longing really be in vain? Shall I never see you here in my room again, ardent and passionate as you once were?

But alas! I must not deceive myself again; I know only too well that the emotions which filled my mind and heart to the exclusion of everything else were for you only the products of fleeting desire, coming and going with the pleasure of the moment. In those too happy moments I should have called reason to my aid to moderate the fatal excess of my delight, to give me some hint of my present suffering. But I gave myself to you entirely — I was in no state to give thought to anything which might poison my happiness or prevent me from enjoying to the full the ardent proofs of your passion. I was too blissfully conscious of your nearness to think that some day you might be gone from me. I remember, however, that sometimes I did say that you would make me miserable . . . but these fears were soon dissipated, and I took pleasure in offering them to you as a sacrifice, in giving myself up to the enchantment and deceit of your protestations. The remedy for all my ills I see very plainly — if I no longer loved you, I should be free of them. But

what remedy is that! No, I would suffer even more rather than forget you. But alas! does this depend upon me? I cannot reproach myself with having wished even for a single moment not to go on loving you. You are more to be pitied than I. It is better to bear all that I am suffering than to wallow in the languid pleasures that your mistresses in France may give you. I do not envy your indifference . . . in fact, I pity you. I defy you to forget me utterly; I flatter myself that I have brought you to such a point that your pleasures must be imperfect without me; and I am much happier than you because I am much busier.

Recently they made me portress of the convent. Every one who speaks to me thinks I am mad — I do not know what answers I give them, and the nuns must be as crazy as I to think me capable of taking care of anything.

Oh how I envy the happiness of Francisco and Manuel! Why am I not always

with you as they are? I should have followed you and served you with more zeal. My only wish in this world is to see you. At least, remember me! I could content myself with your remembering me, but I dare not be sure even of that. When I saw you every day I did not limit my hopes to this, but you have made me understand that I must submit to your will in everything. And yet I do not regret having adored you . . . I am even glad to have been betrayed by you. All the harshness of your absence — eternal though it may prove to be — in no way diminishes the strength of my love. I want the whole world to know of it. I make no secret of it, and I am delighted to have done all that I did for you alone and in defiance of all propriety. It was my honor, my religion, to love you desperately for the rest of my life once I had begun to love you.

I do not say all this to make you feel obliged to write me. Feel no compulsion. I wish nothing of you that does not come of your own free will . . . I renounce all tokens

of your love which you are able to withhold. If you find pleasure in not exerting yourself to write me, I shall find pleasure in seeking out excuses for you. My desire to forgive all your faults is great.

A French officer was kind enough to talk about you to me for more than three hours this morning. He told me that France had concluded the peace. If this is true, could you not come to see me and take me back to your country with you? But no, I do not deserve that. Do whatever seems best to you; my love no longer depends upon the way in which you treat me.

Since you went away I have not had a moment of health, and nothing gives me any pleasure but to say your name over and over a thousand times a day. Some of the nuns, who know of the pitiable state to which you have reduced me, often come and talk to me of you.

I leave my room as little as possible — this room in which you have come to see me

so many times. And I look continually at your portrait, which is dearer to me than life itself. It gives me some pleasure . . . but it also gives me pain when I think that I may never see you again. Why . . . how can it be that I shall never see you again? Have you abandoned me forever? I am in despair . . . your poor Mariana can write no more. A faintness is coming over her . . . Farewell, farewell . . . take pity on me . . .

FIFTH LETTER

I WRITE you for the last time . . . and I hope you will understand from the difference in expression and from the entire tone of this letter that you have finally convinced me you no longer love me, and that therefore I should no longer love you.

At the first opportunity I shall send you everything of yours that I still have. Do not fear that I shall write to you . . . I shall not even write your name upon the package. I have asked Dona Brites to take care of all that. She is accustomed to being my confidante, although of course in matters very different from this, and I can depend upon her more than upon myself. She will take all the necessary precautions to assure me

that you have received the portrait and the bracelets you have given me.

For you must know that for several days I have felt myself capable of burning or destroying those tokens of your love which were so dear to me. But I have up to now shown so much weakness that you would not have believed that I could take such extreme measures. From the very pain it has cost me to part with them I wish nevertheless to extract a kind of pleasure, and I will at least cause you some vexation.

I confess, to our mutual shame, that I was more attached to these silly things than I should like to say; I felt that I had to go over all my thoughts again in order to free myself from each separately; and that at a time when I was congratulating myself on being finally free from you. But what cannot one accomplish when all the evidence points to the one hard conclusion? And so I have given everything over to Dona Brites. My God! the tears it cost me to bring myself to

this. You can have no idea of the thousand uncertainties that can rage within one, and I shall certainly not recount them to you . . . Never, I begged her, should she speak to me of these things, and not bring them before my eyes, even when I longed to see them once again. I was not to know when they were gone.

I realized the whole terrible power of my love only when I exerted all my efforts to rid myself of it! And I believe that I should not have dared to make the attempt, had I been able to foresee how difficult it would be. In every way it would have been a milder torment for me to continue to love you, despite your coldness, rather than to give you up forever. I discovered that it was not so much you as my own passion to which I was attached; it was remarkable how I suffered while struggling with it even after you had become despicable to me through your wretched behavior.

The natural pride of my sex did not

help to strengthen my resolve against you. Alas! I endured your scorn. I would have endured your hatred and even all the pangs of jealousy which your affection for another woman might have aroused in me. Then, at least, there would have been something real to contend with. But what is unbearable to me is your indifference. From the unblushing assurances of friendship and the ridiculous phrases of your last letter I knew that you had received all of mine. You were able to read them, God knows how, without being touched at all. Heartless one! And I am still foolish enough to despair because I am no longer able to flatter myself that my letters were not delivered to you, that they never reached you.

You, with your frankness — how I despise it. Have I ever implored you to tell me the truth? Why did you not leave me my illusions? You needed only to stop writing. I would not have searched for an explanation. Should it not make me even more unhappy that you consider it unnecessary to

deceive me, and that I am no longer able to excuse you? I realize now that you are not worthy of my love; too clearly now I see all your doubtful qualities.

But I entreat you if all that I have done for you gives me the right to ask some small regard for my plea, I entreat you — do not write to me again; help me to forget you completely. If you showed me, even in the smallest way, that this letter had caused you some sorrow, I should perhaps be able to believe it. And perhaps also, your avowal and your assent would cause me new scorn and anger, and possibly all that would make me flame up again.

Have no concern, therefore, with what I do from now on. You would disturb my plans no matter how you might choose to enter my life. I have no desire to know how this letter affects you. Do not disturb the state of being for which I am striving. It seems to me that you should be content with the evil you have already caused.

Whatever may have induced you to make me unhappy, I beg of you leave me now to my uncertainty. In time, I hope, I may achieve some sort of peace. I promise that I shall not hate you. My distrust of strong feelings is too intense for me to dare to hate. Surely, I should find a more faithful lover here, don't you think? But alas! who will be able to arouse love in me? Will the passion of another absorb me completely? Has mine affected you? And have I not proved that a heart is never more deeply affected than when first it is made aware of the depths of feeling of which it is capable? All its emotions are centered upon the idol which it builds for itself. Its first wounds are neither to be healed nor to be effaced. The passions which come freely to the heart's aid and give it power to express and satisfy itself afford it a profound emotion that is never to be recaptured. All the pleasures which it seeks, though without true desire to find them, serve only to show that nothing is so dear to it as the remembrance of past sorrows.

Why must I learn from you the imperfection and pain of an attachment that is not lasting . . . the whole bitter course of a passionate love that is not mutual? What blind and malicious fate is it that drives us irresistibly to those who can have feelings only for others?

Suppose I had the right to look for diversion in some new affair, and I should really find a man in whom I could trust; I have so much pity for myself, that I would reproach myself severely for having brought even the least of men to the state to which you have reduced me. Even if, by some unexpected turn of fortune, it should be in my power to do to you what you have done to me, I should not have the heart to avenge myself so cruelly, although I do not owe you the slightest forbearance.

For the present I try in every way to make excuses for you. I realize that a nun is not particularly suited for love. But then again it occurs to me that when one carefully

considers possible lovers, a nun is in some ways to be preferred to other women! Nothing prevents her from dwelling continually and without interruption upon her feelings; she is not troubled by the innumerable things which disturb and occupy the world.

Certainly it cannot be entirely pleasant for a man to see the woman he loves being constantly claimed by a thousand petty details; and he must be insensitive and superficial who can endure, without giving way to despair, her continual talking of nothing but shops and gowns, parties and balls. One is ceaselessly exposed to countless and ever new causes for petty jealousy, for such women must respect the amenities of social propriety and intercourse. Who can be sure that with all these opportunities they do not carry on some affair, and that they do not suffer unwillingly and with extreme distaste the attentions of their husbands? And how suspiciously they should consider a lover who does not demand a strict reckoning, who trusts without question what they say and

complacently watches them go about their affairs.

But I do not intend to prove to you with faultless reasoning that you should love me. These are very inferior grounds; I have appealed on much better ones and they have come to nothing. I am too well aware of my lot to try to escape it. I shall be unhappy all my life; was I not so even when I saw you daily? Fear that you were not faithful tormented me; I wanted to see you every moment! Foolish wish — how could it be? I trembled for you because of the risk you ran when you used to come to the convent, and lived in continual anguish when you were with the army. I was heartbroken that I was not more beautiful, more worthy of you. I complained of the lowliness of my position. Often I feared that the affection you seemed to have for me might do you some harm. It seemed to me that I did not love you enough. On your account I feared the anger of my family — in a word, I was in as pitiful a state as I now find myself.

If, since leaving Portugal, you had given me a single sign of your love, I should have done everything to escape this place; I should have come to you in disguise. Heavens, what would have become of me after my arrival in France, should you have abandoned me! What depths of shame for my family, of whom I think with deeper affection, now that I no longer feel any love for you!

I realize quite clearly, you see, that I could well have been in an even more pitiable situation than I am now. I speak to you reasonably at least once in my life, do I not? Whether my moderation pleases you, whether you are satisfied with me now, I have no desire to learn. I have already begged you not to write to me again; once more I make the same urgent plea.

Have you ever given a thought to the way in which you treated me? Does it never occur to you that you are more obligated to me than to anyone else in the world? I loved

you madly. Have I not trodden everything else underfoot? Your conduct was not that of a man of honor. Surely you must have had a natural antipathy toward me since you did not love me passionately. And the qualities that so won me to you — they were quite insignificant. What did you do to captivate me? What sacrifice did you undergo for me? Did you not pursue other pleasures? Cards, the hunt — did you give them up at all? Were you not the first to go off to the campaign and the last to return? Regardless of my pleas you exposed yourself recklessly, although I begged you, as you loved me, to take care. You did not try to establish yourself in Portugal where you were already highly esteemed. A single letter from your brother sufficed; you left without a moment's hesitation. And did I not hear from all sides that you were in the best of moods during the entire journey?

Indeed I see no escape from it . . . I must hate you. But I admit, I did everything possible to bring this misery upon myself.

From the very beginning, all too openly, I made you aware of my deep passion; one should use more subtle art to make oneself loved. One must be ingenious in finding means to inflame a lover. Love alone is not enough to arouse love. You wanted me to love you, that was your plan; and once it was conceived, there was nothing you would not do to bring it to fulfillment. You even went so far as to think of loving me, if that were necessary. But you soon discovered that you could accomplish your end without loving me . . . What baseness! Do you think you can so betray me and go unpunished? If you should ever happen to set foot in this country again, I will deliver you up to the full vengeance of my family.

Too long I lived in abandonment to a blind idolatry which makes me shudder with horror now when I think of it. Remorse persecutes me with unbearable cruelty. I feel keenly the shame of the crimes which you made me commit; and now, alas, the passion which prevented me from seeing their enor-

mity is gone. When will my heart regain its peace? When shall I be free of this cruel distraction? But despite everything, I really believe that I wish you no harm. I should have no objection if you were happy! But how could you be, if you have any feeling at all?

I shall write you just one more letter to show you that in time I shall perhaps be more composed. What pleasure I shall take in reproaching you for your wickedness when it no longer touches me so deeply; and when I have come so far as to tell you that I despise you, that I am able to speak with complete indifference of how you deceived me, that I have forgotten both pleasures and sorrows, that thoughts of you enter my mind only when I wish them to — how then I shall rejoice!

Yet I must always admit that you held a great advantage over me, that you filled me with a passion which drove me out of my mind. But you need not boast of that.

I was young, credulous, confined to this convent since childhood. The men I saw were not particularly attractive. Never before had I heard such charming things as you were continually saying to me. It seemed to me that I owed to you the attractions and beauties which you discovered in me, and of which you first made me conscious. People spoke well of you. All the world was on your side. You did all that was possible to awaken love in me; but I have finally shaken off this spell. In this you have given me valuable aid, and I shall not conceal from you that I was sadly in need of such assistance.

Your letters are being returned to you, all except the last two which I am carefully preserving, and which I shall reread from time to time, even more often, if possible, than I have read the first ones, in order to protect myself from all future weakness. I came by these letters very dearly, and how happy I should have been had you allowed me to love you forever! But I realize I am too occupied still with my reproaches and

your falseness. As you know, I have promised myself to achieve a more peaceful state of mind, and either I shall, or I must use some extreme measure against myself — but this, I am sure, will not grieve you overmuch when you hear of it. But I want nothing more of you. I am a fool to keep repeating the same thing over and over again. To give you up completely, never to think of you again . . . that is all that is necessary . . . Yes, all that is necessary. But I will write no more. Am I obliged to give you an accurate account of all my feelings?